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DISCUSSION

A journal for political controversy published
once a month by the Communist Party,
16 King Street, W.C.2

No. 5

JUNE, 1936

Twopence

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“WE have more than once, on principle, defined our views on the significance of discipline and the conception of discipline in the ranks of the Labour Party (nowadays read Communist Party). We defined it as: **unity of action, freedom of discussion and criticism.** Only such a form of discipline is worthy of a democratic party of the progressive class. The strength of the working class is organisation. Without organisation the mass of the proletariat is nothing. Organised it is all. Organisation is unity of action, but, of course, all action is useful only because and to the extent that it advances and does not retreat, to the extent that it intellectually combines the proletariat and lifts it up and does not degrade and weaken it. Organisation without ideas is an absurdity which in practice converts the workers into miserable hangers-on of the bourgeoisie in power. Consequently, without the freedom of discussion and criticism, the proletariat does not recognise unity of action.”

LENIN.

EDITORIAL

IN his article this month J. R. Campbell suggests that there is not enough discussion in Discussion. We agree. There does not seem to be that lively contentious spirit in the working-class movement that there used to be years ago. We are in danger of losing the art of polemics. We all know that an argument often tends to clarify and to modify the views of those taking part. Often it is only after we have heard the objections to our views, and we have countered those objections, that we really begin to understand exactly what we do think. It is only in the course of discussion and controversy that we learn to make ourselves understood, thus making it possible for our general political line to be translated into the practical action of the workers as a whole. The driving-force of all our political activities is conviction; and this conviction is never achieved except as a result of serious thought and argument. Strong convictions cannot arise all by themselves out of nothing. They can only develop in the course of a struggle, out of a conflict of one opinion against another. Convictions are tempered and hardened in action. Conviction without controversy is impossible.

THE attitude of the Communist leadership in the Soviet Union towards discussion is indicated by Louis Fischer in an article, in *Reynolds*, on the new "family life" law. He says that not only does the Soviet Government not regret the widespread criticism being made, but on the contrary, it invites more criticism. As an example Fischer quotes the case of a Communist Party secretary in a clothing factory in the Crimea, who submitted a ready-made resolution in advance of the discussion to a meeting on this question and who was severely reprimanded for doing so by the Moscow *Izvestia*. Another meeting, in Kharkov, sent a protocol of its proceedings for publication in *Pravda*. The paper complains that the meeting offered no single comment, alteration or proposal. It merely adopted a resolution ("not with-

out the aid of the organisers of the meeting," *Pravda* adds sarcastically) approving and welcoming the government draft. Fischer adds : "Such bureaucratic action is not to the taste of the Communists; the Kremlin wants a frank, free, fearless public debate."

OF course we do not want argument just for argument's sake. But it is essential for us to realise that it is not enough for members of the Party to express the Party line simply because it is their duty to do so, to agree as a matter of discipline. The Party policy must become something which each one of us has studied seriously, thought over and argued about. Marxism is not a collection of ready-made and memorised formulæ, councils, recipes, prescriptions and programmes. It is a guide to action which continually has to be applied by new people in new ways under new conditions, as the situation changes and history develops. Marxism—the essence of which is the idea of development arising from conflict, the struggle of two opposing points of view giving rise to a synthesis nearer to the truth than either—demands continuous reapplication and therefore persistent discussion.

IT is well known that Marxism itself was born and developed in the course of the sharpest, even embittered, theoretical arguments. Is it possible to imagine Marxism as anything else but the result of Marx's early polemical battles with the Left Hegelians, his controversy with Proudhon, and, later, his brilliant indictment of the Gotha Programme of the German Social Democrats? Everybody knows of the highly argumentative character of Lenin's famous *What Is To Be Done* and his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, and in fact of practically everything he ever wrote. An illustration of Lenin's enthusiasm for polemics is given by

Krupskaya in her memoirs. She says: "Vladimir Ilyich (Lenin) spoke very severely at the Congress. In his pamphlet *One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward*, he wrote: 'I cannot help remembering a conversation of mine at that Congress with one of the Centre delegates. 'What a depressing atmosphere prevails at our Congress' he complained to me. 'All this fierce fighting, this agitation one against the other, these sharp polemics, this uncomradely attitude!' 'What a fine thing our Congress is,' I replied to him. 'Opportunity for open fighting. Opinions expressed. Tendencies revealed. Groups defined. Hands raised. A decision taken. A stage passed through. Forward! That's what I like! That's life!' . . . The comrade from the Centre looked at me and shrugged his shoulders. We had spoken in different languages."

MARX has said somewhere that any polemics worthy of the name should be both subtle and brutal. True. And we believe that this precisely does **not** mean that we should be both abusive and crude, as sometimes Communist Party members have tended to be in the past. It is particularly important for us, at this stage of development in England, to learn how to argue convincingly without shouting, to learn to rely more upon the strength of our arguments than upon the intimidating effect of our tone. What Marx means is that we must really **mean** and **feel** what we say, and that we should speak straight out, without false modesty or hypocritical politeness. It is necessary for each one of us in the working-class movement to have firm opinions which we have arrived at by study and discussion combined with our own practical experience—strong convictions for which we are prepared to **fight and to fight hard**.

Let's Have Some Discussion

By J. R. CAMPBELL

The title of this magazine is *DISCUSSION*. Its contents belie its title, because quite a lot of it is taken up by straightforward articles of a quite non-controversial character.

And yet there is much to be discussed. Take the Communist attitude to the League of Nations. A few years ago we were describing the League as an imperialist war machine. Now we talk about the strengthening of the League in the interests of peace. Were we wrong in our past characterisation of the League? Or has there been a change in the League and what is the character of the change? This may seem to be an old question to leading comrades. But our Party members and sympathisers are coming up against it every day and they are by no means sure of the answer to give.

Liberal View of War

Then there is the question of *how* the Communist supports the League of Nations. There is, for example, a League of Nations outlook on war and its causes. Wars in the recent past, according to this essentially liberal outlook, were due to international anarchy arising from the absence of any international authority capable of regulating the disputes between nations. There is a danger, in supporting the League of Nations, that some of our comrades will take over this essentially liberal outlook and regard our past analysis of imperialism as obsolete. How ought we to present our case for support

of the League of Nations and collective security, on the basis of Marxism?

It is obvious that no collective security is possible under capitalism—unless there is armed force in the background. But the armed forces of the capitalist state have instruments for holding down and oppressing the workers. On this ground the Communists have hitherto voted against war credits. Can we continue to do so and still support collective security?

People's Front

Communists have been active in promoting the People's Front in a number of countries. Does this mean that we have given up our old opposition to a Liberal-Labour alliance provided the Communists are given a small share in it? Or is there really nothing in common between the People's Front and a Liberal-Labour electoral bloc?

In reply to certain feelers thrown out by the Liberal press we have said the People's Front must be built on the basis of the united front of the workers.

This means united on a national scale first and then a People's Front afterwards. But is it not possible in certain areas to reach the united front and on that basis develop a People's Front movement before the united front is realised on a national scale?

For example, in South Wales it is not only possible to have a united front movement to fight for work schemes in South Wales, but it is equally possible to mobi-

lise 90 per cent. of the Welsh people behind this drive, without anything in the form of a Liberal-Labour electoral alliance. Surely this is a People's Front of a definite character.

Then we must know how to answer the attempts of reactionary Labourists in this country, who are quoting some of the justifiable actions of the Communist Party of France as a cover for their own reactionary policy in this country.

For example, Herbert Morrison in a recent number of "Forward" quotes with glee the fact that the Communists carry the tricolour alongside the red flag and sing the "Marseillaise" as well as the "International." (We think Morrison is mixing up the fact that in People's Front demonstrations this has been done. In the joint Communist-Socialist demonstration to the wall of the Communards on May 24 not a single tricolour was carried in any of the Socialist or Communist sections and while the "International" was sung scores of times within the hearing of the writer, the "Marseillaise" was not sung at all.)

God Save

But why does Herbert bring this up? Because next year there is a coronation. Herbert is going to sing "God Save the King" and wave the Union Jack, and when the rank and file of the Labour Party look askance at this behaviour he is going to say: "Well, why not? The French Communists sing the 'Marseillaise' and the tricolour is carried in their demonstration."

But note. The French Communists are at the moment defending the French bourgeois democratic republic against the fascists. The tricolour is the flag of the revo-

lutionary struggle for that republic against the absolute monarchy. It is a flag with a revolutionary dramatic tradition, a flag therefore which the French working class must not surrender to the fascists. Is the Union Jack such a flag? The "Marseillaise" was composed in the midst of a great revolution and directed against counter-revolutionary intervention. Is "God Save" such a song, Herbert?

Russian Parliament?

And then there are a number of questions connected with recent developments in the Soviet Union.

In a few months the Soviet State will go over to direct election of the central legislative authority. The reformists are already crying that the Soviet Union is scrapping the Soviet system and returning to a parliamentary system similar to that of Western Europe. False. But we must be equipped to expose this falsehood.

The inequality of wage payments, the Stakhanov movement. Do these not mean the abandonment of Communist principles? Many of our trade unionists do not yet know how to answer this question.

Lastly, there are a number of questions connected with the political character of Communist work in the unions. Are we not tending to oppose the reformists from case to case in the trade unions and not seeking in the course of the daily fight to present clearly to the mass of trade unionists our conception of the role of the unions in the struggle of the working class as contrasted with the reformist conception? Is there not a danger that the struggle to eliminate reformist conceptions from the minds of the workers will be abandoned? Is there not a desire being manifested in some quarters for Party

members working in the unions to conceal the fact that they are Communists? Is it clear to all that the trade unions can be won for Communism only by winning a majority of trade unionists and that every elective post won must be used to further the general interests of the workers and to win those workers for Communism? How is it possible for Party members to obtain large votes in the unions and not to be able to make Party members? Does this not

mean that they are failing to carry out a Communist as distinct from a Left trade unionist policy; that the trade unionists are being shown the necessity of their union being made more Left and not also the necessity in the interests not only of better trade unionism, but of the whole working-class struggle of the development of a revolutionary political party.

These are but a few of the questions on which we ought to have some discussion.



KARL MARX

BY FRANZ MEHRING

Translated by EDWARD FITZGERALD.

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The first English translation, from the revised 1933 edition, of a biography which is considered on the continent as a classic socialist work.

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THE BODLEY HEAD

The London District Congress

By TED BRAMLEY

The outstanding weakness of the Party in London, holding back the establishment of Unity throughout Britain, is the lack of decisive mass influence as compared with South Wales and Scotland.

In Scotland we have 30 councillors and a Communist M.P. In Wales we have councillors and Arthur Horner at the head of the Miners' Federation. In both these districts the Party is able to bring the whole population into action on economic and political issues, and to secure a mass vote for the whole revolutionary line of the Party, whereas in London we have not a single seat in the L.C.C. or in the Borough Councils. Of course, our influence has grown enormously in the L.T.C. and local Trades Councils, in some of the most important unions and in the leadership of many strikes. Our connections with the Labour Parties locally are continually increasing. In general, our influence is growing and is greater than at any previous time. But in not a single London borough is the Party regarded by the majority of the workers as an immediate political alternative to the Labour Party. What a difference for the whole Party in Britain if in Poplar, Bermondsey, West Ham, Stepney, we were able to mobilise a support comparable with the Rhondda or Fife! If on the L.C.C. there were one or two of our best spokesmen! Already we have seen how powerful a factor Gallacher is in Parliament and the Communist Councillors are in Scotland

and Wales for leading forward the whole Labour Movement in United Action.

Why this weakness? I believe one of the main reasons for this is because the Party has left the essentially London social issues entirely to the Labour Party and Morrison, who are regarded as experts on such questions. We present no policy on the most vital issues in which active Labour workers are interested and upon which unity and action can best be developed. They are not dealt with by the Party in a public way.

A Programme Essential for Unity in London

If Communist affiliation and unity of the Labour Movement is to be made a living and vital question for every Labour Party member and supporter, the London Communist Party must develop and make popular a policy on these particular London questions. Such a policy is eagerly being sought by wide sections of the London Labour Party.

The Coming Elections

In the forthcoming L.C.C. and Borough Council elections, the Labour Party is faced with the dangerous possibility of losing the majorities (as shown in the by-elections) which, in our opinion, would be a serious blow to the whole British working class. Whilst the Labour L.C.C. has made undoubted improvements—i.e., Waterloo Bridge, the Green Belt preserva-

tion, cooking of food in hospitals, Hackney Marshes and Housing Schemes—nevertheless, they are only improvements upon the admittedly reactionary policy of the Tory majority and have left untouched the key problems and the great vested interests which bar the road to a real improvement for the people of London.

Therefore our policy is vitally necessary to the London Labour Movement for victory in the coming elections, as it provides a line of policy which can rally the people of London.

The Movement Must be United

The policy of Herbert Morrison and the Labour majority is not leading to greater unity and activity of the key organised workers, but, on the contrary, is splitting them and alienating them from enthusiastic participation in the political struggle.

For example—there are 130,000 municipal workers who play a decisive part in the election of Labour Councillors. At present they are seething with indignation at the treatment they have received from Morrison and the Labour majority. They openly talk of voting against Labour in the elections. Clearly such a thing would be a disaster for the whole Labour movement. Similarly, building trades workers are indignant at the non-unionism and bad conditions which prevail on L.C.C. jobs. Transport workers are concerned with the important question of the municipal control of London Transport.

Therefore, the policy must unify the key organised workers and unite them with the people of London whose demands and interests are identical.

Against Whom Must the Blows be Directed?

Against the huge capitalist combines controlled by a few rich families which plunder the people of London! The rich landlords, who extract rents from 10s. to 25s. per week! The great employers of labour, Fords, J. Lyons, the L.P.T.B., who operate speed-up and sweated conditions! The five gas companies that drain 3s. a week from each family. The private electricity companies that charge three times as much as the municipal supplies! The big coal merchants that buy coal at 1s. 7d. per cwt. and sell to Londoners at 2s. 9d.! Against the milk, bread and meat capitalists who have the power to impose high prices, become millionaires and spread malnutrition among the workers! Against the Transport Board which takes 5s. 9d. per week from each family for services badly rendered! Against the City financiers who, through their loans to the Councils, make fortunes in interest which the workers pay for in high rents and rates!

Against this National Government which opposed Hackney Marshes scheme, rating of empty property, refuses financial aid for Waterloo Bridge, restricts the subsidies for housing!

The Draft Outline of the "Communist Programme for London" Circulated for Discussion at the Congress

This is not an outline of what a London Soviet would do, but what can be won immediately. They are primarily social demands. They are not confined to the existing powers and scope of the L.C.C. and Borough Councils, but go far beyond.

They involve the utilisation of all positions on the L.C.C. and Borough Councils to extend the fight of the working class.

This involves a complete break with the line of class-collaboration and requires the mobilisation of the people for action if the demands are to be realised.

Important Questions of Policy

The extension of L.C.C. powers and control is placed as a key question. The demand for the control of the London Police Force to be taken out of the hands of the Home Office is becoming important in view of the Protection of the Fascists.

The use by the L.C.C. and Borough Councils of their resources in the defence of democracy and peace is proposed. No permission for parks, libraries, schools for the use of Blackshirt Fascists or for Territorial recruiting, etc.

The most important question of policy which requires thorough discussion is that section dealing with the Municipal Control of Essential Services.

Municipal distribution of milk is proposed as a matter affecting public health. The distribution of coal, meat, bread is proposed to enable the community to eliminate the high profits made by the great wholesale distributing concerns, and to bring down prices.

Three questions are raised here. Is it wise to tackle the question of distribution rather than concentrating on the question of national control of banks and key production concerns? Secondly, what is to be the effect on the Co-operatives? Is it adequate to say municipal distribution of milk, coal, etc., utilising the Co-operative Society's machinery? Thirdly, what is to be the position of the thousands of small shopkeepers? Can we find a place for

them in association with Co-ops. and to win them against the big concerns and Fascism?

The proposal for popular control through the L.C.C. of the gas, electricity and transport is of a different character. Here we have large-scale concerns, etc.

On the housing and rents question—is the proposal for 200,000 houses at 10s. per week rent adequate? Are we right to support the building of huge blocks of flats? Should we be in favour of the proposals for the preservation of the green belt?

Is it adequate to propose a campaign for the reduction of rents? Should we propose a Rents Restriction Act?

In the Public Health Section the proposal is made for the extension of the National Health Insurance system to include all members of the family of an insured worker and to cover full treatment, including consultants, X-rays, hospital beds, etc.

This would involve the bringing in of the voluntary hospitals into this control and involving a complete reform of the system.

The maternity section raises some controversial points also.

The Town-Planning Section proposes large-scale work schemes, etc.

One section which is totally inadequate is that dealing with the protection of labour, including those thousands employed by the L.C.C. and Borough Councils. Around these workers and their demands of the wage increases, the 40-hour week, etc., can be developed the whole question of the fight for 100 per cent. trade unionism, for proper safety precautions and health considerations in all factories.

The financial proposals are based upon the slogan of *Make the Rich Pay*. How? By forcing the Government to make the required grants for education and work schemes, subsidies for housing, loans at low rates of interest for transport, etc. The social improvements cannot be left to the rates, but must be made a national charge. Is it practical to raise the question of a national tax on the super-rich to be used for municipal grants and subsidies, etc.?

Can a taxation of land values be proposed? Around the whole question of finance the fight against the rich must be organised.

These are some of the general questions raised by the London programme and the Congress which it is impossible, owing to space, to develop in greater detail, but I think sufficient has been said to show the need for a programme and to stimulate discussion upon the character it should take.

The Struggle Against War

By J. SMITH

The difficulty of the struggle against war at the moment is twofold:

- (1) The anti-war forces are divided among themselves.
- (2) Anti-war work is of far too routine a nature.

With regard to the first point: there exists a strong pacifist body of opinion, with which disagreements are apt to appear all too often, e.g., at meetings on the question of Abyssinia, when sanctions are mentioned. Indeed, several such meetings have ended by giving a very poor impression owing to the very fact of the sanctions wrangle coming up. Our duty in such cases is obviously to do our utmost to make the conduct, resolutions, etc., of such meetings run on lines where the maximum of agreement is possible, while putting forward our own views calmly in our speeches—and we have already plenty of evidence that our view is correct.

This brings me to the general question of anti-war unity. There are certain subjects on which all anti-war workers are agreed, and the duty of our members in such organisations as the League of Nations Union, is to see that these subjects receive all the emphasis publicly and in active work, while in private discussion, committee meetings, and discussion groups the whole question must be ventilated in all its aspects, and our members must see to it that such ventilation really does occur, and particularly that all anti-war organisations create discussion groups if they have none, and use properly such groups as do exist. The essential work of the united front is to prove in practice that our whole theory is right, and so win more and more adherents to our Party; but in so doing we have to fight on limited issues. What issues are there?

First and clearest, we all believe in spending less on armaments. The £300,000,000 programme needs far more resolutely attacking.

Secondly, all are agreed that the League of Nations must be preserved and used in some form, and that this country must remain a member. Nebulous though this is, it forms a basis for contact.

Third, I think we may add, opposition to recruiting. Discussion alone, though useful in winning supporters when the proper lessons are drawn from events, is not enough to create a united and virile anti-war movement. It is by practising our united programme on limited issues that we will show ourselves correct in our theory, and looked upon as the only people who know what to do next, when the limited victory is won or partly won. Here we often go wrong, I think. Meetings are good, but only large mass meetings, which generate enthusiasm (and sell literature.) Small meetings are both preachings to the converted and not seldom discouraging. We must do work in a new and more striking way, viz.,

(1) local anti-war exhibitions, especially displays in prominent shop windows, which are quite cheap when an empty shop is available.

(2) street-corner meetings, with posters, etc., sometimes as part of poster parades. (*Real* street-corner meetings are more talked of than practised.)

(3) we must initiate loud-speaker van parades and mass distribution of leaflets by car—we have many anti-war friends with cars.

(4) leaflets must be short and attractive,

and in armament towns, garrison towns, towns with a local military history, e.g., Bury, near here, has a Gallipoli tradition—local points could be used to show up war.

(5) the petition is a great weapon, and one so rarely used to its full extent. A simple petition against the rearmament programme would arouse widespread support, and if properly organised, whole numbers of members of different peace organisations could be “activated” willingly to take round the forms. Local M.P.s are more likely to be shaken by a mass of their constituents’ signatures than by any number of resolutions, and the mass of people is set thinking and talking by a petition and not touched by most resolutions.

Summary

To sum up: our members of different peace organisations must take the lead in finding where all peace-workers are agreed, nationally and locally, and work up virile campaigns *in public* on these points. They themselves must be theoretically sound and thoroughly equipped with the *facts* of the international situation, so as to become natural leaders. Finally, they must organise the peace-workers into groups *inside* the different organisations where differences of policy can be thrashed out (on the basis of local and national experience) without the fear of publicity widening the rifts already existing. In such groups, the highest common measure of agreement can be found, and the united policy fixed. (Such groups are sometimes already in existence, as League of Nations Union Study Groups).

SHEFFIELD PEACE WEEK

By PETER JAMES

The article by Gordon Hicks in the April issue of *Discussion* was a theoretical approach to the formation of local Peace Councils, and though valuable as a preliminary review, is necessarily less useful than a practical example. A Peace Week has recently been conducted in Sheffield, the events of which may serve as a basis for work elsewhere, as well as a warning against the obstacles to be prepared for.

The Sheffield Peace Week Committee was formed to co-ordinate all the local organisations and individuals opposed to the Government's rearmament proposals. It was thus from the beginning a Committee to work on a definite campaign, not merely to talk on principles. Its success was due primarily to this fact—that whatever the particular views of its members, all were united against this one proposal of the Government, and were ready to co-operate in this one aim. It is not intended to leave unconsidered the importance of the various opinions of the Committee members—we shall return to this point later—but it is necessary to emphasise the ACTIVE side of their co-operation.

Organisations

The organisations represented on the Peace Week Committee were: Trades and Labour Council; Liberal Federation; Labour Party; Communist Party; Sheffield Labour Women's Advisory Council; the three Sheffield Branches of the League of

Nations Union; Woodcraft Folk; Society of Friends; Youth Peace Council—mainly Young Communist League, Young Liberals, League of Nations Union Youth Group, Congregationalist Council of Youth and Young People's League; Free Church Council; Methodist Ministers; Unitarian Ministers; Christian Endeavor Holiday Homes Fellowship; Sheffield and District Temperance and Social Welfare Council; Co-operative Guilds; Co-operative Education Committee; Sheffield Branch, National Union of Teachers; Sheffield Educational Settlement; Adult School Union and Workers' Film Society.

The main weakness here was that although the Trades and Labour Council came onto the Peace Week Committee, it did not sufficiently popularise Peace Week among the Trade Unions. Out of the 150 odd T.U.'s, only two dozen were represented at the Delegate Conference; and a campaign which we should have been only too glad to conduct among the factories had to consist of parades and demonstrations in the centre and more residential quarters of the City. For this weakness, the Communist Party must accept much of the responsibility.

The diversity of opinions was shown at the very first meeting in the framing of the resolution on which the Committee was based. Some members desired the resolution to be openly and violently anti-National Government; others, that it should simply point out that the National

Government had made a mistake; other, that it should merely reveal the unconstitutional nature of a "blank cheque" proposal. Ultimately, the Communist Party put forward a resolution—that the rearmament proposals showed a lack of a sincerely peaceful Foreign Policy, and that it was this Foreign Policy that must be changed—which, without antagonising the less progressive members, consolidated a really broad front against the National Government. The resolution was accepted.

The diversity of opinion was shown most clearly, however, at the Delegate Conference. There, the most dangerous view was PACIFISM, strongest in the No More War Movement, but finding support in the Co-op. Guilds, the Labour Party, the League of Nations Union and the Churches. Two particularly dangerous opinions were expressed—that the Abyssinians would have been much better off if they had not resisted Italian aggression; and that "Collective Security" would be the guise under which the National Government would conduct any future war.

Success

These theoretical differences, however, did not prevent the Committee from co-operating wholeheartedly in making Peace Week a success. The initial meeting in the City Hall, addressed by Maurice Dobb, Commander Young and Milner Gray, was attended by 1,800 people, 1,100 of whom signed an appeal from Viscount Cecil for a World Peace Congress. The analysis of the speakers, showing how the rearmament proposals of the Government were the logical outcome of a defective Foreign Policy, were sympathetically received.

During the Week, the Woman's Parade and the Youth Parade were well attended; one of the Ministers spoke at the May Day Demonstration; and the Labour Day procession was notable for the fact that the banners carried were almost identical with those of the C.P.

The City Libraries and the two principal book shops of the City co-operated with displays of Peace Literature. The City Education Committee gave permission for a Peace Week to be held in the Schools. A streamer protesting against rearmament was hung, by permission of the City Engineer, in the Central Square of the City. The film "Peace of Britain" was shown, at our request, at several Cinemas in the City. Finally, a film was taken of the main events of the Week, and has been shown with success at the last meeting of the Workers' Film Society.

Conclusions

Several conclusions may be drawn from the work of the Peace Week Committee, which may help similar work elsewhere.

In the first place, the desire to DO something, as shown by the enthusiasm with which Peace Week was carried through, led to active co-operation notwithstanding differences of opinion. Every Peace Council, therefore, should be formed primarily round a series of campaigns—against rearmament, recruiting, industrial truces, etc.

On the goodwill established by this active co-operation, determined effort must be made to discountenance PACIFISM by building up a clear, reasoned line of policy round the relevant points of the Seventh World Congress Decisions and the tasks outlined by Comrade Pollitt.

in his recent articles in the "Daily Worker." Abstract Pacifism must be shown to be a factor welcomed by, and definitely working in favour of, the National Government's war policy. We have said that Pacifism has support in the Co-op. Guilds, the Labour Party, the League of Nations Union and the Churches; but Peace Week revealed opposite forces in all these organisations which were startled by this show of Pacifism. It must be one of the main tasks of the Communist Party to conduct an explanatory campaign to show exactly how Pacifism plays into the hands of the National Government; thereby the greatest possible opposition to the National Government can be built up.

This campaign can best be organised by mobilising the Trade Unions FOR opposition to the National Government, but AGAINST "pacifist" opposition. Not only will Pacifism be thus eliminated, but a strong rank and file movement will compel the Trades and Labour Council not simply to enter the Peace Council nominally, but to come right into the forefront of the peace movement.

Communists Appreciated

Finally, the appreciation shown towards the initiative and organising ability of the Communist Party in the Peace Week demonstrates clearly that there is a great body of people waiting only too eagerly for a lead to action. That lead must come from the Communist Party.

The Sheffield Peace Week showed, in conclusion, what we hoped and expected: a mass of people anxious for peace, but with the most divergent and confused ideas as to how to get it. The main

purpose of the campaign was to show to the City the mass DESIRE to work for peace . . . the actual WORK for peace is only now beginning. But we have been shown what forces, numerical and moral, we can rely upon.

WORKERS' DEFENCE FORCES

By D. L. B. SPENCER

It is difficult to discover exactly what E. Burgess and "Young Worker" visualise their Workers' Defence Forces as. In so far as they say anything definite they both seem to have become enamoured with the idea of forming embryonic Red Army units. If this is so, and I think the inference justified by Burgess' reference to "a body of strong, fit men on demonstrations" that "will give a dignity and substance to the Labour movement," and by "Young Worker's" panegyric on discipline, then all that need be said is that their plans are very premature indeed. The development of the mass struggle has a long way to go yet before it will be correct to put out such slogans. An organisation such they visualise will be a result of the mass struggle and not a factor in creating it. All that such a premature call would do would be to gather in the "lumpen-proletariat," for what section of the workers "do not see the value of trade unionism or political parties" and yet would join a defence force To defend what? Obviously, neither trade unions nor political parties.

In general the line put by John Gollan seems to me to be correct. The intensification of the drive for a mass struggle

against fascism is the only real solution, and anything likely to sidetrack it is a positive danger. In Germany the Communist Party organised such a defence force, and as a result there arose a tendency to neglect the development of the mass struggle and to rely on the defence force to keep out fascism. The result we all know. Yet Burgess and "Young Worker" do raise a real problem, an immediate problem of direct fascist and police attack on anti-fascist and indeed ordinary peace meetings. It is one that cannot be merely left until we have created such a mass movement that we have swept the fascists right out. We seem faced with the alternatives of creating an organisation which will probably distract our attention from the main struggle, or of remaining open to fascist attacks.

There is a solution, and one that has been tried in practice. It is this. Instead of bothering about organising permanent disciplined bodies in every locality, it is quite possible to select a body of comrades before every meeting or demonstration, whose sole task it will be to look out for trouble. If a measure of common sense is used such a body can meet any attack in an organised manner. It stands to reason that where such an attack is expected, such preparation should be made to meet it. If this practice is adopted there will be adequate protection and at the same time no danger of our being distracted by thoughts of creating "a body of strong fit men on demonstrations," etc., etc. Let us take Gollan's advice and create such a body, if we want it, by sports and not by street fighting.

THE PEOPLE'S FRONT IN EUROPE

By W. RUST

The growing power of Communism, which will bring fresh inspiration to the workers in the fascist countries, is one of the most outstanding new factors in European politics to-day. The Left victory in France is directly attributable to the policy of the Communist Party, the unswerving building up of the workers' united front, and upon this basis the skilful winning over of the middle classes for the struggle against Fascism. Writing in the "New Statesman and Nation" (May 2nd, 1936), Alexander Werth stated: "They (the Communists) have been the

driving force of the Front Populaire, and "dynamically" the strongest element in that anti-fascist force. Their election propaganda has been particularly skilful. Their great slogan has been "a free, strong and happy France."

The Communists were the initiators of the whole idea of the People's Front. Eighteen months ago Maurice Thorez called on the Radical Congress in Nantes to join in a "people's front of liberty, labour and peace." The Communists, understanding the historical significance of the alliance between the workers and

the middle classes (including the peasantry) were the actual creators of the People's Front, a task achieved in face of considerable Socialist opposition.

If we look back on the transformation that has taken place in the Communist Party of France we must wholeheartedly admire the extraordinary ability of the leadership to break away from "self-satisfied sectarianism" to grapple quickly with new situations and to carry out what Dimitrov called for at the Seventh World Congress—"a definite, active Bolshevik policy with regard to all internal and foreign political questions arising in their country, with regard to all urgent problems that affect the vital interests of the working class, of their own people and of the international labour movement."

Make the Rich Pay

The People's Front developed because the Communist Party, which had become a strong, independent force, was able to show in a practical manner the road forward to a "free, strong and happy France" and to work out a fighting programme as a basis for the common action of the organisations included in the People's Front. The fight for the Franco-Soviet pact, the daily leadership of the economic struggles of the workers, the determined representation of the peasants' interests, the attack on the 200 ruling families and the slogan "Make the rich pay" resulted in the Communist Party standing out as a great popular leader of the masses, especially as the methods of propaganda have assumed a particularly attractive, convincing form. Our brother party has succeeded in demonstrating that the revolutionary workers of the present day

are the true inheritors of France's glorious traditions of freedom and revolution.

Now that the People's Front has won the election the need for this fighting, leading role of the Communist Party is greater than ever. The People's Front will either have to go forward in its fight for peace and the defence of the masses' interests or give way before fascism. Already there are ominous threats about the manipulation of a financial crisis. It is certain that the bourgeoisie and the Croix de Feu will not take their defeat lying down. A bitter fight lies ahead. Comrade Thorez had this in mind when he emphasised at the May meeting of the central committee of the Party that it is necessary to strengthen the rank and file committees and to create a stable organisation of the people's front of labour, liberty and peace. *"Only the activity of the masses," said Thorez, "can help us to secure the actual disarmament and dissolution of the fascist leagues."*

Spain

Similarly in Spain, where the armed struggle of October, 1934, made possible the present new revolutionary upsurge, immediate action to improve the conditions of the masses and the organisational consolidation of the People's Front the urgent tasks of the day. Something must be done at once about the poverty of the peasants, the land problem has got to be solved by giving the land to those who till it. Louis Fischer in the "New Statesman and Nation" draws a terrible picture of the poverty of the Spanish peasant and declares:

"The Spanish peasantry is the victim of

a semi-feudal land-owning aristocracy. Agricultural technique is as obsolete as it was in Tsarist Russia, and the standard of productivity is low. . . . Spain, which lacks everything, nevertheless counts 700,000 urban unemployed. The population has little money, little consuming power, and the national economy accordingly is derelict."

The victors in France and Spain raise important new questions regarding the relation of the Communist Parties in these countries to the new Left government. In Spain the Communists and Socialists are supporting Azana's republican government and demanding that immediate steps be taken to tackle the land problem. But in France the Communist Party was actually invited to join a Social-Radical government. This offer was, however, not accepted and the Socialist Party is now proceeding with the formation of a Left government, sharing the Cabinet posts with the Radicals.

Speculation

This decision of the Communist Party has given rise to considerable speculation and adverse criticism. Some critics even allege that the Communist Party is shirking responsibility and awaiting an opportunity to take advantage of the government when it blunders or encounters difficulties. Blum himself implied this criticism when he stated that those who expect him to play the role of a Kerensky will be disappointed.

Nothing could be further from the truth than the assumption that the Communists are aiming at a Machiavellian discrediting of the new Left government.

On the contrary, the aim of the French Communists is to give every possible assistance to the government in the carrying out of a fighting policy, and to rally the masses around it. The Communists do not disclaim responsibility for a government which is largely the result of their own untiring efforts; they well understand that if this government, which embodies the hopes of great masses, goes down in ignominy it will be amidst the cheers of the Right and to the great satisfaction of the fascists.

Reasons

The Communists are staying outside the government in order to be in a better position to support it in the Chamber and in the country. Viewing this government as a stage in the fight for the programme of the People's Front, jointly agreed upon by the Communists, Socialists and Radicals, it is clear that the future of this fight will not be confined to the Chamber of Deputies and the ministerial offices. The government must receive the organised support of the masses, whose readiness to enforce popular and democratic decisions will in turn encourage the government to pursue a bold course. The Communist Party will do its utmost to strengthen the mass organisation of the Popular Front to develop the rank and file committees, not as "Soviets" or as an alternative government, but in support of the Socialist-Radical government and for the fulfilment of the People's Front programme. The Communist Party is in a far stronger position for doing this by remaining out of the government than by going in, especially as its presence in the Cabinet at this moment would not bring any material

new strength to the government, but would only increase the howls of the reactionaries who are desperately trying to stir up a panic.

It is perhaps necessary to add that the Communist Party has never professed to be a parliamentary party. "We are fighting for Soviet Power," said Thorez at the Party Congress last January, and he has repeatedly emphasised the revolutionary aims of the Communists to his Radical and Socialist colleagues. In fighting for the demands of the people the Communist Party has not got its eye on ministerial posts, but on the glorious socialist future, the bringing forward of the day when the masses will become convinced of the necessity of completely overthrowing the capitalist system. Consequently, the Communist Party is acting quite consistently when it does not enter the government, it is quite justified when it expresses disappointment with some of Blum's recent utterances and emphasises that "Make the Rich Pay!" was one of the most popular slogans of the election.

Dimitrov's View

This does not mean that the Communist Party is opposed to entering any and every government prior to the achievement of Soviet power. Under certain conditions the formation of a united front government, inclusive of the Communists, may be one of the means of preparing the way for the overthrow of capitalism. Dimitrov's observations on this question at the World Congress are important to recall as a line of approach.

He suggested the following prerequisites for the formation of a united

front government:

"First, the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie must be already sufficiently *disorganised* and *paralysed* so that the bourgeoisie cannot prevent the formation of a government of struggle against reaction and fascism.

"Second, the broadest masses of toilers, particularly the mass trade unions, must be in a violent state of revolt *against fascism and reaction, but are not yet ready to rise in insurrection, to fight under Communist Party leadership for the achievement of Soviet power.*

"Third, the differentiation and leftward movement in the ranks of Social-Democracy, and other parties participating in the united front must have already reached the point where a considerable proportion of them demand *ruthless measures against the fascists and other reactionaries* struggle together with the Communists against fascism, and openly come out against that reactionary section of their own party which is hostile to Communism."

The new experiences of the class struggle will undoubtedly lead to the further elucidation of these conditions, but the stress laid on development of the movement of the masses is of cardinal importance. In France, the enthusiasm and high hopes of the masses are still mixed with many illusions. The level of the mass movement in France has not yet reached the same height as in Spain, although the occupation of the factories, taking place at the time of writing, is an inspiring indication of how rapidly the movement can develop.

The Communists in France will devote their energies to this task, they will con-

tinue their work of strengthening the revolutionary forces and re-uniting the working class. In France we have checked fascism and raised the fight against war to a new plane. *We have succeeded in doing what*

we failed to do in Germany. The French working class is now the vanguard of the labour movement of Europe, and its achievements are a mighty lesson to the workers of Britain.

Metal Workers and the Government's Arms Proposals

By George Fredericks

"This will require the most careful organisation and the willing co-operation both of the leaders of industry and of Trade Unions if our task is to be accomplished. But the Government has every confidence that these conditions will be fulfilled." (Government White Paper on Armaments—issued on March 3, 1936.)

It is important that we should all thoroughly understand the issues raised by the Government's Arms proposals. In view of the rather lukewarm opposition shown to them by certain trade union leaders and their apparent willingness to come to terms with the Government in return for small concessions, it is necessary for us to define our position very clearly and give an organised lead to those sections of the Trade Union and Labour movement who are bitterly opposed to any form of class betrayal. The broader political issues—the question of the need for "Defence" against the possibility of Nazi aggression in the present near-war situation and the possibilities of developing a mass movement against the National Government as an instigator of war—might form the subject of a future article in DISCUSSION. I propose to confine myself

to the narrower industrial and Trade Union aspects of the question as they concern the metal workers, particularly the workers in the war industry.

What, then, are the Government's proposals with regard to Trade Union co-operation, and how do they effect the metal workers?

Labour Dilution

To sum up, briefly, the Government wants:

- (a) An industrial truce;
- (b) Labour dilution in order to carry out its plans.

This will need some clarification. The Government proposes to launch a vast rearmament programme, which will convert a major portion of the engineering industry to war production. Not only will firms like Vickers, Cammell Laird and Fairey's, vastly extend their production as the result of the poaching of new Government contracts, but engineering firms hitherto employed in the production of peace-time commodities will be brought into the arms machinery, and new, highly rationalised aircraft factories will be built to cope with the mad rush of orders. This

will mean both an increasing demand on the part of employers for skilled engineers, toolmakers and others to lay the technical basis for the expanded war production, but also, in far larger quantities, of semi-skilled and unskilled workers to work in the repetitive processes made possible by mass production. (This problem is, of course, at the moment far greater in motors than in aircraft.) For some months now, the employers and the Press have run a campaign round the alleged shortage of skilled labour in the engineering trades—whereas we know that there are thousands of unemployed skilled men at hand ready to be employed at Trade Union rates. (The A.E.U., for example, claims to have 6,000 unemployed members on its books to-day.) This, however, is neither the Government's nor the employers' intentions. Government Trainees have already been drafted in considerable numbers from the Labour Exchanges to aircraft and other arms producing factories. The idea, of course, is to "Dilute" the more expensive labour of Trade Unionists with the cheaper labour of Government Trainees and thus undercut the workers at present employed at Trade Union rates.

Collaboration

It is obvious that this cannot be accomplished in a wholesale manner without the collaboration of the unions concerned, without the leadership being persuaded to call off in advance all militant action by the workers in the face of such threats or such action. The York Memorandum already provides the basis for such co-operation as it virtually ties the workers' hands by not allowing prior negotiations on industrial changes. But this is not a

sufficient guarantee for the employers that the Unions will "take it quietly" when the moment comes (did not the A.E.U., for example, recognise the De Havilland Hatfield strike only a month ago!), so it is possible that some promises will be made by the employers in the shape of small wage-concessions or other bait. In return, of course, the Unions will have to sign their right to strike action on wages or any other issue over perhaps 2, 3, 4 or 5 years. The method by which the Government and the employers will try to put across their plans will, therefore, be one of *industrial* rather than *military conscription*. We must clearly recognise this distribution and take note of the delicacy of the Government's position. Too rapid a move might be fatal—besides, conscription of any kind is not on the immediate order of the day. So it proceeds stealthily, not to threaten or dictate, but rather to cajole and try to hoodwink the less advanced workers into believing that they are getting something—higher wages, better chances of employment—out of this deal. Then once one concession has been made by the Unions, the Government will become more bold, and gradually, step by step, advance to a more directly dictatorial position.

"Dilution" and the Unions

We must clearly point out to the workers how fatal such a policy of class-collaboration would be. What would be its effects on the Unions? To sum up briefly: firstly, by tying the hands of the Unions, the employers would be able to introduce Trainees into the factories at less than Union rates without the effective opposition of the Union machinery.

Secondly, far from providing Trade Unionists in the industry with benefits (as the capitalist Press has been at pains to point out), Trade Union rates would be threatened and, in a later stage of "national emergency," scrapped altogether (unless the workers had recovered sufficient strength to defend themselves). Thirdly, in a period of rising prices such as is found to be introduced by the new war situation, the workers would be unable to use the Trade Union machinery to negotiate for wage increases. Fourthly, the Government would be in a vastly stronger position to drag the country into war. A strong Trade Union movement, pledged to fight for the workers' demands, is a mighty bulwark against war. This is a major consideration and must not be lost sight of.

No Industrial Truce !

In view of these considerations, as Communists, and Trade Unionists, our attitude towards these proposals must be one of uncompromising hostility. Our central slogan must be "No Industrial Truce !"

How can we carry out this slogan in practice?

Firstly, we must press forward with such general demands as the full restoration of the 1931 cuts, the 40-hour week, Union control of overtime and dilution, industrial training for the youth, district rates for all adult workers, and the revision of the York Memorandum. These questions must be brought up at every branch and district committee of the Unions. The importance of the wages struggle in wartime cannot be over-emphasised. We have the example of the Clydeside Shop

Stewards who, in 1915, carried the struggle for wage increases forward to the general struggle against war.

Build the Shop Stewards' Movement

But the central attack must be made through building up the Trade Unions, particularly of the shop and factory organisations. *Our main effort should, therefore, be to build up a strong shop stewards movement in all sections of the metal industry.*

We have seen the enormous strides made in the last 12 months by the aircraft shop stewards, who have set up an aircraft shop stewards' National Council with a programme of practical demands for all aircraft workers, and won considerable gains as to wages, Trade Union recognition, withdrawal of time-study methods and workshop conditions in the largest aircraft factories in the country. These workers have already shown in no uncertain fashion their hostility to labour dilution and rationalisation by the recent Fairey and De Havilland strikes which were fought and won on these very issues.

No other form of organisation will effectively defend workshop conditions and wages against the employers' attacks and the threat of dilution. Therefore, it becomes a most urgent task for the militant engineering workers to set up shop stewards' committees through their Unions in all sections of the industry—in light and general engineering, as well as in motors and aircraft. Only by having their elected representatives in the workshop itself can the engineering workers counter the threats to Trade Union standards that are contained in the White Paper proposals.

A BASIC RATE FOR THE SEMI-SKILLED?

By JAMES WATT

It is clear that engineers occupy a key position in industry as far as the Government's Arms Plan is concerned. What would appear to be less clear to some of our Party members is the fact that an effective mobilisation of engineering workers against this plan demands not only the organisation of the relatively few highly-skilled workers in the industry, but also the much larger number of workers of varying degrees of skill (comprising adults, youths and women) who are classified broadly as "semi-skilled."

The semi-skilled are numerically far in excess of the skilled, particularly in the newer, light engineering fields, such as aircraft and motors, and the disproportion is growing all the while, to the disadvantage of the fully skilled. Yet many of our engineering comrades seem to be oblivious of this fact and little real effort is being made to attract these sections even into the trade union movement.

Non-Unionism

At the outside one in four of these workers are organised in trade unions in the London area, and it is significant that most of the recruiting that has been going on among these sections has been for the *general* rather than for the *engineering* unions.

We believe this is mainly the fault of the A.E.U. itself inasmuch as it adopts an attitude of indifference to any but the highly-skilled sections in the industry, and we

have to record observing examples of this attitude even on the part of Communist members of that organisation!

Personally, we believe that a fight to establish a *minimum basic rate* for all *productive workers* in the engineering industry would do much to draw into the ranks of the A.E.U. big masses of the semi-skilled who are now wholly unorganised or drifting into the general unions because their contributions are smaller.

Criticism

The criticism we have so far encountered of this proposal takes mainly two forms: (1) Those who say that any adult worker in the engineering industry is worth the skilled rate (i.e. 4½d.), and that to put forward a middle "basic rate" is to concede a point to the employers and divide the ranks of the workers; and (2) those who say that the fixing of a basic rate is superfluous and that the matter can best be handled by going forward for higher wages factory by factory according to organisation and circumstances.

To those who take the first point of view we would say that such an attitude would appear unreal and impracticable to the average semi-skilled worker in, say the motor trade. Here (precisely because there is no basic rate for these sections of workers) we have workers who are not "machine workers" in the generally accepted sense of the term but who possess

varying degrees of skill (such as riveters, drillers, assemblers, examiners, electric and acetylene welders, etc.) and who are certainly *productive workers* in the most positive sense of the word, but who are quite without status and “enjoying” the labourers’ rate of a shilling an hour. It does not seem to us “un-Marxist” to assert that workers who have served years of their life learning a trade are entitled to a higher wage than others who possess a measure of skill which (should) differentiate them from the labourers, but who nevertheless do not come in the same category as the tool-maker or fitter. We believe that Marx himself recognised and explained the difference between Simple and Complex labour. Modern methods of production may have lessened the gap between these forms of labour, but surely no one would maintain that it has obliterated it? If those who maintain that any adult worker in the industry should qualify for the “skilled” rate mean what they say they should be campaigning for a *higher* rate for those who have had to devote years of their life and to acquire expensive kits of tools than they at present command—but we do not remember ever hearing this point mentioned by the protagonists of this viewpoint.

Psychology

To group number 2 we would point out that there is a great psychological value in fighting for a definite rate in contradistinction to a demand for “an increase.” Workers are much more ready to fight for what they recognise as an established right, as something they are entitled to, than they are to fight for “something extra.” The engineering worker in particular pays great importance to “the rate” and will

not easily be made to work beneath it if there is any earthly chance of getting it. Once force the employers to recognise the difference in principle between those who do simple labouring (a very tiny percentage of the total) and all those who play an active productive role; once establish a minimum basic rate, even though it be only twopence above that of the labourer, and you have taken a big positive step forward and prepared the way for the very much bigger ones which can follow on the heels of increased organisation and a higher political consciousness.

We are convinced that a campaign to establish a *minimum basic rate* for those big masses of workers who come somewhere between the labourers and the fully skilled would constitute a very popular *immediate demand*, that it would draw into the engineering union big numbers who are now indifferent, thus tending to break down the narrow craft spirit still alive in that union, and would pave the way for still bigger wage advances in the near future.

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Rank and File Movements, Trade Unions and the United Front

By ALEC BROWN

In any question of tactics or of strategy a certain degree of guidance is to be obtained from observing what the enemy thinks of one's deployment of forces. One learns from this which features of one's activity cause the greatest concern to the other side. This reveals the enemy's weakness. One may obtain hints of such guidance from a leading ruling class newspaper like "The Times." The fine moderation of some of "The Times'" leaders, the fine sense of when to retreat, is worth our study; a beautiful example of this was provided with the recent leader which suggested a halt in the ruling class threats of conscription. On May 27, "The Times" provided us with another illuminating article on "Railwaymen and Extremists." "Not in the railway unions alone, but likewise in all the transport organisations, the left wing movement has been increasing its activities and adding to its strength." This strikes a familiar note. "... the unions seem to have diminished their watchfulness against the penetration of influences, etc." Reference in particular is made to the tendencies among the London busmen. It is here the revealing rather novel note appears, which I suggest should serve us as a signpost. "The Times" with evident alarm speaks of the work being done among London busmen, but what most alarms is that this work "at a high pitch again now" is "keeping within the bounds of what the union's rules allow." What is the point?

This, that when rank and file activity drives forward to activity which the union's rules do not "allow" "The Times" calls for and approves of any action by the officials of the union concerned which crushes the militant activity not "allowed" by the unions; but in this leading article of May 27, the alarm is shown at the utilisation of the unions for what they do "allow." There is always a note of complacency in reports in "The Times" of conflicts between rank and file movements and union officials, but the appearance of rank and file activity within and through the union officials produces the threat which ends the article; "The Trades Union Congress will not be able to ignore the issue that has been raised." Threats reveal weakness, and the conclusion to be drawn is that a rank and file movement which succeeds in putting life into a trade union and using it to the very full, "keeping within the bounds of what the union's rules allow," is regarded by "The Times" with apprehension.

Do I mean this for a mere plea for limiting activity to "legal" union work? Not at all. Beyond the union work lies something else. But to this something else, this development of the existing unions into a real revolutionary force, it is hopeless to proceed until the mass of the membership of the unions themselves readily and consciously press forward towards it. This depends on mass rank and file sense of the full power of the unions.

and this in turn depends unquestionably on utilising the unions to the absolute full, within the bounds of what the rules do allow.

Here in fact we have the very essence of the whole united front conception of revolutionary struggle in a bourgeois democracy, such as Britain, as distinct from an open bourgeois dictatorship, such as Germany. The growth of fascism is largely dependent on indifference to and/or disillusionment in those liberties and rights a bourgeois democracy does provide. What is "wrong" with the ordinary Labour Party or Social-Democrat "constitutionalism" is not the belief in "democracy" but the passive acceptance of it, in place of development of active conscious utilisation of that democracy, beyond which lies something else, is, expansion and development towards a revolutionary change. Herein lies the tremendous importance of such activity

as working for seats on town and parish and all possible councils; it is in such full utilisation of existing democracy and development of consciousness of that democracy in the widest possible strata, in actual practice, that Communist and Labour Party man or, on the war issue, League of Nations enthusiast, meet. Similarly, in this question of the rank and file movement in the union, it is in the actual day to day work of utilising the unions to the full within the bounds of their present rules, and of awakening the full membership to fully conscious utilisation of the unions, that "constitutionalist" and revolutionary meet and learn to understand one another. In such collaboration, too, not only does the revolutionary learn to understand the complex causes of the "constitutionalists'" hesitance, but also the "constitutionalists" learn to understand what the revolutionary is really about, and gradually become revolutionaries themselves.

There can be no discussion on this point at least—

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Liberty and the Social Revolution in Britain

By M.

It is almost a truism that in every revolution the revolutionary forces feel themselves to be fighting for liberty, a passion for which inspires them. Without going back to the French or Russian revolutions, but considering solely the events of the past few years in Western Europe, we can see how every great popular movement has been based on a union of economic demands with the struggle for what the people of the country concerned considered to be their liberties. In Spain the success of the People's Front was won in the struggle for an amnesty, for the reinstatement of workers victimised for their political opinions, for the restoration of full legal rights to all working class parties. In France the People's Front won because it led the struggle against fascism, which almost everyone except the capitalists felt to be an immediate threat to their liberties. Even the rise of the Nazis was largely due to the belief that they would liberate the German people from the chains of interest slavery and Versailles.

Ruling Class Against Liberty

We are no less attached to our liberties than are the people of any other country. There is no better proof of this than the extreme caution with which the ruling class, now that its interest urgently demand the destruction of all liberty, encroaches on our rights. Consider, for instance, the speedy release of Pollitt and

Mann when they were arrested in Wales, the non-utilisation of the sedition act, the hesitation over the introduction of air raid drill.

Socialism

And yet the labour movement seems unable to make use of this British love of liberty in order to win mass support for a big step forward towards socialism. The National parties very ably use the existing democratic rights in this country, claiming that they wish to preserve them and attacking the Labour Movement as out to introduce tyrannical state control over everybody, the dictatorship of Sir Stafford Cripps or of the Bolsheviks. The right wingers in the Labour Movement use this same slogan of liberty to attack the Communist advocates of the dictatorship of the proletariat. And not only is this argument about liberty one of the arguments of Winston Churchill or Sir Walter Citrine, it is almost the only argument which wins them any real support. How are we to escape from this position, in which what should be one of our most useful weapons has been stolen by the bourgeoisie? By action; we must show everyone in a practical immediate way how they can extend their personal liberty and how we are for this, the Tories against it.

And what form does this action take? Here is the point; we cannot simply copy

the slogans that have been successful abroad, we must hit at the forms which capitalist oppression takes in this country. The National Government has not at home committed the atrocities of the Spanish Government nor thrown 30,000 people into jail for their politics; The B.U.F. is not a pressing immediate menace to our liberties as the Leagues are in France. And yet people in England are not free, they are all the time worried and anxious about their jobs, they fear that by putting forward their just claims or by offending some whim or prejudice of the boss they will get the sack. And, therefore, they are careful, conceal their thoughts and try to ingratiate themselves with their superiors. Here is the key; the British bourgeoisie rules not by political repression so much as by an economic repression. This it is particularly able to do not only because of long - standing mass unemployment, but because with the absence of a free peasantry there is a greater proportion of employees in the population of Britain than in any other country in the world. To take one example out of a million, which shows not only how this method is used far outside the limits of the working class in the narrow sense of the word, but also how it is operated unobtrusively and by threats alone. Last summer the students of a leading London training college by a huge majority declared their opposition to air raid drill in schools and decided to publish the resolution. The Principal, a well known liberal educationalist who is as full of illusions about British democracy and ordered progress as a balloon is full of gas, told the students that were they to get the college a name for

this kind of thing they would greatly impair their chances of getting jobs. Thinking of 8,000 unemployed teachers the students reversed the decision to publish the resolution.

Here, then, is where we have to hit in order to win liberty for English people, at the employer's right to sack. Why should we not wage a campaign like the one which has been waged in France, for the dissolution of the fascist leagues, for a law forbidding the employer of more than six people to sack any one of them without the consent of a committee freely elected by the workers in this undertaking? If we were waging such a campaign there would not be a Tory, Liberal or Heralditite in the country who could maintain that anyone but the reds and their allies stood for liberty.

Notes to Contributors

1. Articles should be written on one side of the paper only.
2. They should be short (2,000 words is according to our standards a long article).
3. The name and address of the writer must be sent.
4. The 5th of the month is the latest date for the reception of articles intended for publication in the issue due out on the 15th of the same month.
5. Everybody is invited to contribute to Discussion. We welcome especially materials from members of the Communist Party, the Labour Party, the Socialist League and the Independent Labour Party. Contributors who belong to these or other bodies are asked to indicate their organisation.

We Must Educate New Members

ANON

Our task in recruiting should not stop short at getting people into the Party. They need very careful training after they have joined, and it is this which is being neglected all over the country. Very often young workers join up knowing little more than the fact that the Communist Party is fighting for their class. It is our job to turn these recruits into real Marxists. At present they are bewildered, and often antagonised by a jargon which nobody bothers to explain: bored by being shoved onto all sort of irresponsible jobs, and made to feel foolish, ignorant and bothersome.

We could correct this by assigning each new recruit to the care of a responsible Party member, who would explain the workings of the Party, both locally and nationally, answer questions, give advice and in all ways make the new member feel at home and understand his new Party. There should be more and better elementary classes in theory than there are at present, and there should be some theoretical adviser, over and above the cell instructor and the local organiser, in each subdistrict, who would advise all comrades on their reading and act as a consultant when people are in difficulties.

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Books

It would be a great help if a reading list of fundamental works were issued and distributed to recruits. Something of this kind is now being prepared by Cambridge students, but this is in accordance with their special needs, and would only be of general value if issued nationally. Armed with such a list, the comrade in charge of a new member could urge him to raise his political level, and by constant tactful enquiry see that he does. More use could be made of the Marx House correspondence courses, either to supplement or replace classes. A group of new comrades led by someone more experienced could subscribe to one of these courses at a cost of a few pence weekly.

The theoretical training of housewives is often a great difficulty; this could be overcome by day-time classes, or, if this is impossible, by discussion groups among themselves, and by extended use of correspondence courses. Or several women could meet together and do their week's sewing while someone reads aloud from some fundamental Marxist work. Quite a lot of ground can be covered in this way.

If the theoretical training of the recruit is provided for, it still remains to train him in organisation. This could be done by giving him small but *responsible* jobs right from the start, so that he feels the Party needs and appreciates him. Let him do write-up for the "Daily Worker" (his copy should be looked over before being sent off), do some job of research for the organiser; organise canvassing; or undertake literature sales for his cell. There are innumerable jobs recruits can do, with a little help and supervision. It is of paramount importance that they should never

be given orders from above, and made to feel that they are doing dull and unimportant work, with no possibility for initiative.

As Comrade Stalin has said, cadres are of the greatest importance, and we can only build up these by realising that the mere act of filling up an application form does not automatically raise a sympathiser's political level to that of an experienced Party member. New recruits must be treated at least as attentively as sympathisers, and trained really painstakingly and interestingly. If this were done at the beginning of every member's Party life we should be nearer a really Bolshevik Communist Party.

The Jewish Problem

A Reply to F.S. by John Brown

The tone of F.S.'s article proves without any shadow of doubt that we are dealing here with a Jewish comrade in whom is rooted the old leftist approach, an approach arising from the fact that the Jewish worker has to conduct a struggle on two fronts, i.e., he has to free himself as a worker and—as a Jew. He has to free himself from the influence of capitalist ideology and from the power of religion which is still so strong among the Jews.

The cause of this misconception is in the main, that owing to the peculiar circumstances under which the Jewish worker has to fight his way to class consciousness—the fight on two fronts—the result is that as soon as he frees himself from the above-mentioned influences he turns himself upon his previous milieu, isolating himself from his old surround-

ings, becoming a stranger, almost an antagonist in their midst.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the class-conscious Jew no longer has any influence or authority among his people. He gets repaid in his own coin.

The defence of the rights and liberties of the Jews constitutes one of the means by which a tremendous strengthening of the working-class forces can be achieved.

When, as a result of the worsening of the crisis, the blackshirts have begun to introduce some of the Continental methods in their anti-Jewish policy; when the Jewish masses have become aware, and concerned about, this menacing fact—and those who are associated with them witness how this awareness and alarm expresses itself in various forms—there come along some comrades and weakly propose to these agitated masses who are groping for a lead, that the only solution is “Socialism,” and “the class struggle.” A greater confusion of terms and ideas could hardly be imagined.

The main problem at the moment is the growth of anti-Semitism for which the blackshirts are responsible. This has been amply illustrated by the outrages perpetrated on Jewish workers and shopkeepers in such districts as Hackney, Shoreditch, Golders Green, etc., note of which was made in most national newspapers.

Something must be done about this.

A bureau should be formed to (1) make an exhaustive study of the Jewish problem; (2) formulate plans of action; (3) to issue literature upon the subject, etc. This would do much to make things more difficult for the blackshirts in their attempt to use the Jews as a lightning rod.

Letters

To Editors, DISCUSSION

DEAR COMRADES,—Following the suggestion made by S. Mill (No. 3) that something should be done to draw scientific and rationalist circles into the common fight against reaction, I have communicated with Chapman Cohen, President of the N.S.S., and he has agreed to give me space in *The Freethinker* for a series of articles in which I shall try to put the Marxist position with special reference to the R.P.A. and N.S.S. Perhaps comrades will look out for this series and see if they can add suggestions.

Yours fraternally,

JACK LINDSAY.

DEAR SIR,—As one of the old “Pioneers of Socialism,” I want to congratulate you for producing *Discussion*, which I intend taking permanently. It stimulates thought, sustains interest, promotes action, and contributes a valuable means of correcting mistakes, and will have a great influence in countering sectarianism, infantile and senile disorders.

In conclusion, it is absurd, in my opinion, to oppose the united front. It is perplexing to hear avowedly class-conscious individuals opposing co-operation and unity as a means towards overthrowing capitalism, which in its modern form, Fascism, is a most ruthless and brutal terror, entrenched behind finance and militarism. Yet militarism may ultimately become the Frankenstein monster that will finally bring the death throes.

The Brass Hats don't cover brains capable of running capitalist countries. An antagonism is already becoming more plain. Financiers are frightened even of their own Protectors!—Yours sincerely,

J. W. DIXON (Old Age Pensioner).

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